

State Board of Education

The High School Experience

**Norfolk Forum
4/22/2004**

State Board of Education

Norfolk Forum – The High School Experience

4/05/2004

Table 41

Key Points in our discussion:

- Look at using time in more flexible ways (length of day, school calendar, delivery systems, integration of technology for alternative delivery of instruction) for more effective delivery of instruction.
- Need to assure that students have a well-rounded education, e.g. academics, activities, social development.
- Focus on building positive relationships with each student. Need to assure students feel connected to the curriculum, to staff, to others regardless of diversity, and to community.
- Build partnerships with others outside the school system, i.e. business, industry, post-secondary education, other schools, parents.

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1. What should a hs diploma mean?
 - a. Certain standard of expectation
 - i. Math/reading especially
 - b. Level of readiness for next step-work or education
 - c. Well-rounded—academic, interaction skills, independence
 - i. Concern that non-essential classes are being dismissed to focus on meeting standards
 2. What should be done to make hs more meaningful to all students?
 - a. Delivery (not just lecture. Need to use technology)

- b. Help students understand why courses are necessary. Make it meaningful so students see how it connects to “real world”. Help them see the reason for learning. Practical application
 - c. Let teachers be creative in the classroom.
 - d. Need staff development opportunities for instructors to become comfortable with new delivery methods and diverse teaching styles
 - e. Tracking—need to make it meaningful and rigorous no matter what their academic preference (hands-on or “academic”)
 - f. Today’s student population has changed dramatically over the past few years—poverty, ELL, mobility.
 - g. Need to keep non-academic opportunities in program. Keeps kids interested who may not be connecting otherwise with school
 - h. Need to get over concept of “seat time” vs. progression by ability and options created by technology
 - i. Year-round school?
 - j. PEP (personal educational plan) has merit
 - k. School size is a factor. Break groups down into smaller cohorts.
3. What’s working, not working, changes needed?
- a. When teachers are bored or have low expectations = poor atmosphere for students. Need to have committed, enthusiastic teachers. Don’t accept mediocrity.
 - b. Give more personal attention. Another argument for smaller class sizes
 - c. Block scheduling seems to work well (more group projects, involvement, less pure lecture, schools are quieter)
 - d. More creative ways to infuse technology into learning. Kids learn differently than they used to (do many tasks at the same time)
 - e. Need to come up with a different way to grant credits (performance based provision). Kids learn at their own pace—quick or slow. Competency vs. seat-time
 - f. Need to have research that supports that diverse learning environments can still be quality experiences
 - g. Expectations have changed. We expect schools to do more things, e.g. Feed breakfast, teach values, discipline. Parents may not be available due to working many jobs or not caring.
 - h. It’s not just “bottom line” in education. It’s not just another business.
4. How do we keep students engaged?
- a. Not all students get involved in non-curricular activities. One school mixes students in their groups (high involvement and low involvement students). By mixing them, they seem to connect more and hopefully increase involvement.
 - b. Need to engage the parents.
 - c. Engage students the moment they walk into the classroom.
5. How do we prepare students to transition successfully?
- a. Help students see that what they learn is useful.
 - b. Tech Prep, Dual Credit, get business people and college people into the schools
 - c. Promote technology, communication, and human relations skills

- d. Form more partnerships with business and post-secondary (e.g. TANN Academy)
- e. Need to keep industrial arts classes in the h.s.

Summary statements

Need to integrate technology

Need to keep classes relevant and meaningful. Practical application

Need to provide well-rounded experiences

Need additional delivery methods besides lecture

Not all kids are ready for college right away. Maybe need time away from school for a year or two.

Need to do something to engage with each student every day.

Need to make sure students connect in some way with the school (staff, activities)

Important to have high expectations

Need to have cooperative relationships with external partners

Please use the space below to record your table groups comments and discussion.

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Key Points in our discussion:

- We need to create a new box. We cannot run dual educational systems.
- Districts should define a set of expectations that include academics but also life skills beyond academics.
- Each student should have a Personalized Educational Plans. These plans would break down the P-16 barriers as well as provide relevancy and direction for students and teachers.
- The high school curriculum needs to ensure that the educational needs of the lower two-thirds of the students are also being met.
- We should work toward creating a seamless education from preschool through postsecondary.

What should a high school diploma mean?

All students have mastered the skills

For all students

Should tell the business world more

50% graduated Does it mean the same now? You have to have it to get in college.

Students are taking classes without diploma

Take away the lines and look at the P-16 focus

Individualized instruction, credit for outside experiences,

Design your own curriculum

Standards and assessment defined as outcomes

No designated grade levels

Children who are not meeting the outcomes numerous experiences to support the students

Have skills sets changed

Mobility issue

Language barriers

Children with preschool and no experience with preschool

Parents want their child to have what they had

Until we decide what the outcomes related to the diploma

What is working and not working in the high school

We are meeting the needs in a variety of ways

Special education population is growing

Lincoln has 40 languages

Department of Education is dictating control

Standards are minimum rather than raising the bar

The power of working together

K-12 teachers knowing each other and what they do

Learned new skills, strategies, and approaches from each other k-12

Writing teachers using the same terminology.

Ex. 3 Schools together to write curriculum

Curriculum connections are not being made

Is some of the curriculum not relevant?

Difficulty to tell students why something is necessary if district is questioning

Portfolio performance based

Are we more geared to college bound students than vocationally prepared?

We are not providing what every student needs

How do we keep all students engaged in the high school experience?

Sports

Extra Curricular Activities

This is where you learn to work with others and use the social skills

The connections they are making with teachers is very important

Connections with mentors in and out of school

Some schools are just too large and connections are not being made

Question: What enrollment is too small to offer the curriculum described by the state?

Some places we have more teachers than student McPherson High

The issue is what is quality education

Essential Curriculum is going to be more costly for smaller schools.

We have to define what the outcomes are for students

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Table 43

Key Points in our discussion:

- **Parent Support of Education is two-fold**
 - Family structure is a strength in Nebraska (especially for the top 75%)
 - Mismatch between parent expectations and school expectations in some instances
- **Expand the discussion and solutions**
 - The issue is actually a P-16 issue
 - The solutions are beyond just the secondary school walls (parents, community, etc.)
- **Too many students arrive at school not being able to see their future**
 - Mentoring programs are needed
 - Students need to connect with at least one caring adult
- **Current strengths are**
 - Dedicated staff
 - Strong curriculum opportunities
 - Dual credit
 - AP
 - Family support
 - Partnerships with colleges and other entities

- **We agree that we really need to address the issues impacting the performance of the bottom 1/3**
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Table 44

Key Points in our discussion:

Dream School

- Partnership with parents and child
- Expand the School
- Early academic support
- After school support Mentoring program
- PEP
- Balance with education and activities
- Communicating with parents of Student activities
- Helping Student develop goals
- Use of Technology to enhance learning
- Community Partners to assist our student

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- [What about High School Diploma
 - What is working and what is not working
 - Academically working better
 - Change of philosophy
 - Comfortable with technology
 - Workings with student in the lower third area need to address with the higher third.
 - What component do we need to assist our student into the community to assist in their education? To assist them to achieve their academic skills when challenging with their family needs. As those 3 lower third student needs.
 - How does homework, show up on time how do we assist the student to achieve the importance of completing their homework.
 - How can the lower skills student achieve their academic skills to responsibilities outside the home?
 - Work expectations to participate in a group, i.e. a student and C student.
 - Families dynamic have changed
 - Extra Curricular activities in the high level
 - Look at College level courses such English and Math at a higher level.
 - AP classes for higher student and then has lower AP classes.
 - Keeping Student more Technical and industrial skills keeping them active in the cicurlar activities. More interesting.
 - PEP would be essential for the student

- Various Club student can bring themselves upon to their opening of their ideas
- Do way with grades level instead for Tier
- Year around school
- Homework policy educating and after school plan.
- Technology tutor assistance on the computer, to help with educating the student to achieve their academic skills. The school can develop a plan on the computer so the student is able to complete their homework.
- Positive attitude with parents expressing their child needs. Progress reports know what their children are doing. Communicating with parents of child.
- Translator with student giving them the idea to help other students of the same language. This could be a community activities student,
- How a mentoring program with the parent and student this could be within their own development of plan of achievement.
- Early intervention program after school.
- Raising the expectation level i.e. sports.
- More encouragement and more excitement with writing and reading.
- Program with upward bounds getting them ready for college. And mentoring/volunteer after school program.

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Table 45

Key Points in our discussion:

- Core Academics – there is still a set of the core curriculum and skills that all students need. Social, Economical and Political skills are needed to be well rounded
- Community/School Partnership – have student participate in community activities and community involved in the school
- “How smart are you?” to “How are you smart?”
 - Shift from schooling to education. Personalized Education – Build on their strengths

What should a high school diploma mean?

Ready for next step – bridge to next avenue

Cultural – acceptance into world of work

Productive person within personal capabilities

Gives you the skills to succeed

Diploma has tiers of meaning – honors SPED or college bound makes a difference but legally the same

Instead should demonstrate “How are you smart?”

What should be done to make the high school experience more meaningful to all students?

Performance-based

Real-world – address political, social, economical goals

Must be seen as the beginning of the rest of your life

Interest-based - Personalized education – know their strengths

*More career exploration – reality-based – broad fields –job shadowing,
internships, entrepreneurship – exploration groups – technology,
agriculture, areas Presentation
Citizenship - Community service work – connect them to the community –
learn from community members
Technology skills needed in college and in the workforce
Understand cultural differences
Academics - rigorous
Freshman & Sophomores – general track then specialized
Virtual High School – AP courses
Future planning – statewide
Learning academies –
Carnegie Units?*

What should be done to make the high school experience more meaningful to all students?

*High schools today...
What's working in our high schools?
What's not working in our high schools?
What changes should be made?*

*How do we keep all students engaged in the high school experience?
Academically?
Socially?
Activities?*

*How do we prepare students to transition successfully to...
Postsecondary education?
Careers?
Other?*

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Table 46

Key Points in our discussion:

- Make individual plans for students to create relevance—follow up
 - Allow multiple ways for students to demonstrate skills
 - Engage all local stakeholders in decisions of schools
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- More meaningful curriculum
- Students who are currently juniors may have enough credits to graduate in the middle of their junior year
 - Top 1/3 of students could do this
- Original idea of diploma meant you were an “educated” citizen
- Does “diploma” mean the same thing for each student?
- Does every kid need the same diploma to be successful?
- Need to find strengths and talents of young people much earlier and provide support and nurturing for them based on their strengths
- Deal with whole child—feelings, wants, needs, health and well-being, as well as academics
- Need for career guidance at an early age—junior high or earlier—look at career options and determine which math course (for example) they need for their career choice
 - Parents need to be in on course selection
 - Plan needs to be followed up on and adjusted if needed
- Need to show kids the relevance of what they are learning
- Make kids feel they are a part of something
- High school diploma—enter the workforce or go on to further education
 - Either path should show that students have become productive citizens and can contribute to society
- Must get away from configuring the day based on seat time and putting kids into schedules based on that
- Create lifelong learners
 - High school diploma is not the completion of anything
- We have allowed higher ed to chart our course in education

- Allow students to have multiple paths to demonstrate the same thing
- For system to change we must retrain professionals to teach differently than how they learned
- Make schools more inviting
- Relevance and connections build relationships

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Table 47

Key Points in our discussion:

- Higher Education could be a better partner to the P-16 process if certification issues could be resolved.
 - Change from “college prep.” to “career prep.” for all students. Eliminate the perception that high expectation are for college bound students only.
 - Structure of the school calendar and/or school day better meet needs of today’s students.
 - Curriculum must be more relevant to student lives.
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Diploma means

- One size doesn’t fit all
- A marker of time spent not learning achieved
- High school too long for some, for others too short
- It is no longer a stopping point; it’s only the beginning. Diploma is a transitional point in life
- Like to see kids in classes and also world of work
- Cross curriculum more
- Diploma indicate competencies
- Gobs of programs for handicapped, nothing for the kid who gets a “B” and never opens a textbook
- If a student already has competencies, they shouldn’t have to go through all the classes. Education shouldn’t have to be necessarily in a building.
- Concern for asking 14 year olds to make decisions they aren’t ready to make when we talk about different kinds of diplomas.
- Give kids choices but don’t lock them into a plan for the diploma of a certain type
- Diploma should also mean they are responsible people who can make choices and good decisions.
- Maybe problem begins in elementary school. Were they socially promoted?
- At 7th ad 8th grade, they hit blockage points where if they haven’t mastered a subject, they are not passed.
- We don’t teach reading after elementary school, (reading as an example) for those who are delayed in learning skills or miss skills

- Maybe investigate the European system. Students make more choices
- 5th year option for some students
- Top third of students just quit because they are bored, bottom third just give up because they are so far behind
- 4 days a week – 7 ½ hours each day, 10 weeks on - 10 weeks off – perfect calendar for Osmond and Randolph school
- If a student is 18 and not finished, can they go another year? Expensive, but needs to be done. It should be okay for students to come back to get missing skills. They should have the option of going until 21

What should be done to make school more meaningful to all students?

- More work experiences
- Tie in with colleges and
- Differentiate between college prep and non-college bound; you are saying to some they are not capable of going to college. Should offer all students the college prep classes.
- These skills are needed for students in other schools (community colleges) and those jobs. All require advanced math skills, technology no matter what job they are in. Even need a foreign language
- Hold high expectations for all students
- “High Schools that Work” a program out there that expects all students to take higher-level classes. Lower level classes are not offer.
- Kids take the easier road if it is offered. So don’t offer it.
- Gear learning toward their future not towards just getting a diploma.
- We are the only nation in the world where our students are not taught to be bi-lingual
- Diversity of our students is greater today they years ago.
- What do we want for our students when they graduate? Then go backwards to get them prepared for that expectation.
- Career preparation: should include decision-making skills, to learn to change and take new avenues.
- Should be no difference between career prep and college preparation
- Guidance counselor program:
 - Each school has a different role,
 - Coordinator of job shadowing
 - Social skills teaching
 - Work with PEPs
 - Career planning
 - Teaming with teachers
- Important to teach “team work” to students. Life skill and work skill needed to succeed.
- Adding rigor to all courses. How do we do this and still keep kids in school?
 - How will we deal with this? Let kids re-enroll when they drop out
- High expectations are based upon abilities. Rigor in classes is based on that.
- We need to start a kid where they are at and then meet their needs by individual program, tutor, or other support to get them to the level of their peers or NCLB level of achievement. Peer tutors and mentors
- If we look at outcomes based or competency level, the number of years we take math has nothing to do with diploma. Should be the meeting of competency

High schools today- what's working?

- The longer a child is in the system do better than those in the mobile population
- Needs of upper third of students are well met by our schools
- Careers classes make kids more aware of opportunities and increased communication with businesses and colleges.
- Extends the students awareness of wide opportunities available to them
- Parents are becoming more aware of the accountability, public dialogue is increasing.

Not working?

- Loose too many students
- Failing student can't be in sports- incentive to some, but what about those not involved in extracurricular activities?
- ESL student is left out or lost in the school setting
- We don't know our students very well personally...don't know about poverty rate, mobility rate, etc. and are not responding to these conditions as well as we could.
- Work with CCC's to provide agriculture classes, technology classes, construction classes, mechanics,
- System of post secondary certification is not the K-12 to teach a class for a high school when the school can't provide the program any longer

Changes that could be made?

- Structure of the school day. Start too early, end early to meet activities practices
- Different yearly calendar
- Cross curriculum
- Extended time for teachers to plan together – extended contracts

How to keep all students engaged in the high school experience?

- Relevancy to real life of the child
- Relevancy keeps child engaged
- Shortcoming may be making all students socially involved
- Character education needs to extend beyond the elementary level
- Activities are for all students, but not all students and parents see this or encourage their students to become involved
- Expand our ideas of activities to maybe include service projects, doing for others without any reward or prize to the student
- Small schools more students have opportunity to be involved
- Level of competition in larger schools keeps kids from being involved

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Table 48

Key Points in our discussion:

- Increase communication with parents, businesses, colleges, students.
 - Tech Prep: Importance of technical degree. Bachelor's degree not for everyone.
 - Improve transition strategies. Bring in recent grads from 2-year, 4-year, & military to talk to students. Bring in high school students to help transition junior high students.
 - How do we engage all students?
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Please use the space below to record your table groups comments and discussion.

What should be done to make the high school experience more meaningful to all students?

Need input from colleges so students ARE better prepared. What exactly to they expect?

Need input from business/industry as well.

Businesses need to call the school for references. Perception is negative if students hired are not loyal and intend to stay.

Students should be looking more at the technical schools rather than a 4-year degree. It's not for all students. Technical careers offer excellent jobs.

Respect for all kinds of learners.

Students are not willing to take more difficult classes.

How to prevent students from taking "easy" or "light" load their senior year.

Dual-credit classes may be the way to keep seniors motivated.

PEP Personal Education Plan

Drop idea of college prep, go to concept of career prep. Get some life skills. Personal finance, etc.

Trades need to go into schools, discuss apprenticeships.

Involve parents in what we expect of kids. What employers are expecting of kids. Learning is important, not the grade.

Parents unrealistic expectations, ex math over 3 years in order to learn.

Grading?????

How do we prepare students to transition successfully to....

Get former students to come back and share experiences. Messages... go to class...social—time management. Study habits. Lots of reading---on your own. Independence, responsibility.

High school students, help junior high students transition, too.

Develop work habits. Tardies, absences. Parent contacts.

How do we keep all students engaged in the high school experience?

How to deal with roommates. Budget time. Involvement.

Graduation requirement, either service learning or one activity.

Reorganize schools away from current class schedule? Work toward a goal. Investigate all aspects of the goal. Integrated learning.

Mandates prevent change.

Math teachers 24 days of testing, not instructing. Tests don't count—kids won't perform anyway.

Students afraid about what they are going to do after high school.

Year round school?

MOTIVATION? Learning styles. Homeroom. Teachers move. Students stay together, just like in elementary.

Allow graduation in 3 years, 3 ½, 4 years or more.

No real advantage in graduating early. Changing math and science requirements.

Applied classes? More than one way to learn core curriculum.
Need more articulation.

High schools today.....

Nebraska test scores are good... especially our top students. Worry about the other 2/3 of students.

Parent involvement is key. Build parent involvement. Parent responsibility!! Invite parents in. Make appointments. Student-led conferences with portfolios. All parents came. Secretaries set up appointments.

Dedicated teachers!! Willing to put in hours to do what needs to be done.

Educate every student that walks through our doors. Opportunity exists. Unfortunately that's not always appreciated.

Well-qualified teachers. Highly educated. Good teaching techniques.

Kids are bored, unmotivated, apathetic. Need alternative schools. Kids having problems have more severe problems. Increase in depression.

Schools asked to do more. Health issues. Poverty. The more we do, the more people expect.

Lack of structure, lack of expectations at home.